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AUTHOR	Post, William J.
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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of what business leaders can do to help schools prepare the workforce of tomorrow. As the pace of change in American businesses quickens and their communities broaden, the need to recruit both a highly skilled and diverse workforce increases. Businesses should take more responsibility for setting employment standards, supporting minority education, integrating partnerships, and focusing on the health and welfare of all youth. The state's high minority population growth promotes a clear message: ethnic and racial minorities are the key to Arizona's future. Their education is synonymous with Arizona's economic success. The paper looks at the new nature of work where effective workers are those who can use resources wisely, have high levels of interpersonal skills, use information well, work with systems, and use technology. It also discusses current educational issues regarding minorities and looks at what corporate leaders can and must do to help educators and students. "An Integrated Arizona Education Vision in Partnership with Corporate Arizona" is introduced with the objective of providing all Arizona's citizens access to a high-quality K-16 education. This shared vision would concentrate on six goals critical to the state's economic future. (VWC)

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ED 435 420

Corporations & Schools: An Integrated Partnership

PRESENTED BY

WILLIAM J. POST

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

APS

ARIZONA MINORITY EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS CENTER (AMEPAC)

A POLICY CENTER OF THE

ARIZONA COMMISSION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

OCTOBER, 1997

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ARIZONA MINORITY EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS CENTER (AMEPAC)

MISSION

AMEPAC is a policy center operated by the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education.

The Center's mission is to stimulate, through studies, statewide discussion, and debate, constructive improvement of Arizona minority students' early awareness, access and achievement within all sectors of education.

The Center, under the auspices of the Commission, will accomplish its mission through:

- policy research
- analysis of policy alternatives
- promotion of public discourse
- advocacy, through studies, of partnerships involving local board and institutional partnerships to improve early awareness, access and achievement
- advocacy, through studies, of policies that stimulate the responsiveness of the public school and postsecondary community to current and future public needs
- public recognition, through studies, of individuals and institutions demonstrating measurable success in implementing the Arizona Compact for Minority Student Achievement

To accomplish its mission, the Center focuses on four fundamental questions. The Center's primary activities relate to the sponsorship of reports related to these questions:

1. What does Arizona's future require of higher education in its mission to educate increasing numbers of minority students?
2. What is known and what can be learned about the effectiveness and productivity of higher education's efforts to equal educational opportunities and assistance to increasing numbers of minority students?
3. How well do current and proposed policies match individual and public needs to educate increasing numbers of minority students?
4. How successful is the state in achieving the goal, set in 1990 by its three state education governing boards, of proportional enrollments and comparable achievement for its minority students?

The Center and the Commission seek to promote wide public discussion of the future of Arizona minority student education among concerned parties including civic, community and education leaders, students, parents and leaders from government and business. The Center and the Commission seek constructive engagement of all these parties with these issues that will help shape Arizona's future through a communications strategy that includes publications, convening meetings and media strategies.

The guiding operational principles of the Center are careful, accurate nonpartisan and independent analysis; products (publications, reports) that are accessible to a lay audience; openness to discussion and debate — listening to critics as well as supporters; and a broad public interest perspective on minority student achievement issues.

The Commission is the Arizona statutory body charged with the conduct of numerous statewide, education-related activities including the study of the postsecondary education needs of unserved and underserved individuals within the State.

The data, ideas, conclusions and recommendations in this paper represent the work of the author and not that of the AMEPAC Board of Directors or the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education.

Corporations & Schools: An Integrated Partnership

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WILLIAM J. POST

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

APS

AND CHAIR OF THE AMEPAC CORPORATE FELLOWS PROGRAM

CORPORATE FELLOWS PROGRAM

SCOPE, MISSION, AND OBJECTIVES

Scope

The Corporate Fellows Program of the Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC) is designed to provide leadership and resources in support of the mission and goals of AMEPAC.

Mission

To establish and sustain AMEPAC as the leading minority education policy analysis center in the State of Arizona.

Objectives

Establish a Council of Fellows of AMEPAC to:

1.
Provide expertise and counsel on policies which will affect all of Arizona's students, with special focus on minority students.

2.
Provide resources to assist AMEPAC in furthering its goals.

3.
Provide guidance in the development of research topics pertinent to the State of Arizona and the minority student population.

4.
Leverage the research and reports published by AMEPAC and support policies which will have a positive impact on the minority population of Arizona.

5.
Provide a forum for interested fellows to discuss AMEPAC's mission, research, and policy recommendations.

6.
Twice per year, convene the fellows to provide strategic direction.

CORPORATIONS & SCHOOLS: AN INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP

As the pace of change in American businesses quicken and their communities broaden, corporations are more committed than ever to recruiting both a highly skilled and diverse work force. At APS, at both our customer service center and our power plants, the diversity of our work force is critical to our business success.

In the state of Arizona, one out of every five residents is Hispanic. To serve Hispanic customers at APS, we installed a special Spanish language line which employs bilingual employees who, during the winter field on average about 4,000-5,000 calls per month. At our Four Corners Power Plant, about 73 percent of our employees are Native American. To better understand their concerns and those of their community, we recruited as our manager of Human Resources and Government Affairs a key leader on the Navajo Nation tribal council.

Human resources are the key to any successful company and continued success is dependent on an excellent work force. For example, SBC Communications (formerly Southwestern Bell) routinely recruits other former Bell employees who have been through rigorous corporate training and can both sell the product knowledgeably and who reflect and understand the needs of their community's diverse customer base.

But, these creative recruiting strategies assume that a talented and diverse pool of employees is out there — a group which can draw on its unique backgrounds, expertise, influences and differences to support and add value to the company they work for. In coming years, the employee pool will shrink as baby boomers retire and leave the work force. In the future, corporations will shift from a downsizing mode to one of career development for talented employees. Layoffs will be replaced with a focus on developing the talent needed within the organization to produce successful results.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that many students now entering the work force are both unprepared for the competitive challenges of the corporate world and lack an understanding of the diverse audiences that make up their communities.

What can we, as business leaders, do to help schools prepare the work force of tomorrow?

We certainly must do more than just advocate educational reform. We cannot afford to be armchair quarterbacks; we need to stop just criticizing the system and start getting involved locally with Arizona's K-16 system. I, personally, am a strong supporter of public education and the Arizona school system. As a business

leader involved with the Phoenix Union High School Business and Education Partnership, the Phoenix Chamber Education Committee, the Greater Phoenix Leadership and the Central Maricopa School-to-Work Consortium, I believe businesses should take more responsibility for setting employment standards, supporting minority education, integrating partnerships and focusing on the health and welfare of all youth.

Corporate Arizona's continued prosperity depends on a steady flow of well-educated entry-level employees who can make valuable contributions to their organizations. Arizona's public schools' role is to prepare students for this employment future. Unfortunately, we have not been as successful as we should, especially in the minority area. This vital sector, nearly 30 percent of Arizona's population and 40 percent of Arizona's youth, holds the key to Arizona's future. Although the state's population is currently growing overall, the highest growth percentage comes from minorities. Hispanics are the largest minority at 18.8 percent, followed by Native Americans (5.9 percent), African Americans (3 percent) and Asians (1.5 percent).[1] Hispanics account for one out of five persons in Arizona. As of 1993, 40.3 percent of all Arizona's public school students were minority, while the nation's minorities were at 34 percent.[2] From 1995 to 2010, it is expected that the minority population will increase by 63 percent.

Corporate Arizona's continued prosperity depends on a steady flow of well-educated entry-level employees who can make valuable contributions to their organizations.

The message from these statistics is unmistakably clear: ethnic and racial minorities are the key to Arizona's future. And, the education of minorities is synonymous with the economic success of Arizona. We must ensure that Arizona is a national leader, not only in economic and social indicators, but in educational excellence.

I believe businesses should:

- Partner with schools to put programs in place that will increase the number of poor and minority students who graduate from high school with the skills necessary to effectively enter the work force.
- Make clear and explicit to parents, students and teachers what skills, knowledge and behaviors all entry-level employees must have.
- Create a structure for integrating, coordinating and expanding business-education partnerships throughout the state that focus on high skills, assessment and accountability.
- Integrate existing coalitions and develop new ones devoted to increasing the general level of health and welfare of Arizona's children and youth.
- Partner with Arizona's K-16 system — schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities — in an effort to improve minority student achievement and school-to-work skills.

Let's look at why we must act now.

The new nature of work

The nature of work has changed dramatically in the past 40 years. Motorola's Chief Executive Officer Gary Tooker defines the nature of competitive work as follows:

> The skills required of successful performers in the information age are quite different than those 10 years ago. Today, and in the future, continuous learning is the most important skill. Successful employees must be able to articulate their thoughts and use complex thinking skills to become problem solvers.... Employees need a basic understanding of the organization and how it functions. Throughout all of this, a basic foundation of uncompromising integrity and respect for every individual is required.

What will it take to create this employee of the future? According to a report by a Department of Labor task force called *What Work Requires of Schools A SCANS Report for America 2000*,[3] effective workers are defined as those who can:

- *Use resources wisely:* allocation of time, money, materials and staff
- *Have high levels of interpersonal skills:* working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading and working well with people from diverse backgrounds
- *Use information well:* getting and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communicating and using computers
- *Work with systems:* understanding social, organizational, and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and designing or improving systems
- *Use technology:* selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies.

In order to be successful, employees must be proficient in the basics but must also approach their work with responsibility, integrity, flexibility and concern and respect for others.

Educational issues

It is obvious that the best hope for Arizona's children is education. We must provide all of Arizona's citizens access to a high-quality education from kindergarten through college. Schools already face an enormous education task with children who are healthy and live in functioning and economically secure homes. Compounding the task are the tens of thousands of Arizona youth, particularly minority youth, who are in continuing jeopardy.

Arizona's record in serving minority youth has been very disappointing. According to *The Kids Count Data Book*,[4] Arizona is ranked 40th out of the 50 states in child health and welfare.

POPULATION INDICATORS	PERCENTAGE	ARIZONA RANK
Low birth-weight babies		20
Infant mortality rate		26
Child death rate (ages 1-14)		44
Rate of violent teen deaths		36
Teen birth rate (ages 15-17)		45
Juvenile violent crime arrests		38
Teens not in school and not working		39
Children in poverty		37
Families with children and single parent		31

These standings are unacceptable. Arizona's economic well-being depends on children growing up to be valuable contributors to their communities. To make this happen, they must be given every chance to have a healthy, secure and productive childhood.

Growing up in poverty, however, means attending poorly funded schools where students are often labeled "at-risk," "remedial" or "unable to learn." These children are often tracked into nonacademic programs where instead of being challenged with high expectations, they are made to feel as if they are incapable of learning.[5]

By the time these students reach high school, the situation is even more serious. About 12.6 percent of Arizona students drop out of high school. This is the second highest dropout rate in the nation. Additionally, our state ranks 42nd in high school graduation rates.[6] According to the Arizona Department of Education, in 1993-1994, 12th grade dropout rates were highest for African Americans at 18.4 percent, Hispanics at 16.6 percent and Native Americans at 15.3 percent.[7] For those who do graduate, the majority go directly to work. Of those who desired to go on to college, only 31.3 percent of Hispanics, 32.1 percent of African Americans and 22.1 percent of Native Americans, as of 1990, were even eligible to attend the Arizona University System.[8]

Therefore, whether students complete high school or go on to college, they must understand that performance in school is linked to opportunity in the workplace. We must make college education a realizable goal. But, for those students who choose not to attend college, we must be sure to define a set of standards of performance which are a prerequisite to successful entry into the business world.

Until we do, it is no wonder that Arizona corporate leaders often struggle to find employees who both have the necessary technical skills and who reflect the diversity of the communities in which their companies do business.

What corporate leaders can do

Corporate leaders can influence their employees to help children acquire business skills, they can sponsor internships and career day programs so students can see skills in action, they can support youth-serving agencies that provide young people opportunities to practice business skills and they can assert a collective presence in civic affairs where decisions are made to increase or decrease educational opportunities for youth to learn.

And, although corporate leaders cannot directly influence the day-to-day schooling experience, they can encourage employees to become active in school councils, to run for office as school board members, to volunteer in schools and other youth-serving organizations, and to give public voice to the legitimate needs of children and their teachers.

What corporate leaders must do

Corporate leaders must renew and extend efforts to help educators and students understand and believe that school performance is tightly connected to work opportunities. That is why many businesses such as Motorola, Phelps Dodge, Honeywell, Bank of America, Arthur Andersen, Holsum Bakery, SRP and APS, among others, have partnered with high schools to develop a multi-faceted education program which involves scholarships, teaching of employability skills, teacher/student mini-grants and a career day. This program endeavors to make the business world real for high school students who often dismiss the advice of teachers on the grounds that teachers are not legitimately part of the "real world."

In March, 1997, the Arizona Board of Education, for the first time, approved a set of Workplace Skills Standards. Their aggressive position helps set a future expectation for both educators and business leaders.

Students and educators need clear messages about what businesses expect of entry-level employees. And, for those graduates, especially minorities, who want to succeed in their own businesses, corporations should use their experience to mentor those starting out. At APS, for example, we strongly support minority-owned businesses. In October 1991, we created the Minority- and Women-Owned Business Development group. This group is dedicated to facilitating competitive business opportunities for minority- and women-owned business enterprises. When we first formed the group, we wanted to primarily promote our company's use of minority- and women-owned businesses. Now, we recognize that was not enough. We want to take our involvement a step further by actively mentoring these enterprises to help their businesses grow.

Arizona corporate leaders often struggle to find employees who both have the necessary technical skills and who reflect the diversity of the communities in which their companies do business.

To that end, we have recently formed the APS Academy for the Advancement of Minority- and Women-Owned Enterprises (AAAME). The mission of AAAME is to support the successful growth of small minority- and women-owned enterprises in order to enhance the economic health and stability within Arizona. Currently, there are six minority-owned businesses being mentored by APS.

An Integrated Arizona Education Vision in Partnership with Corporate Arizona

An Integrated Arizona Education Vision in Partnership with Corporate Arizona begins with a simple, yet powerful objective: To provide all of Arizona's citizens access to a high-quality education from kindergarten through college. The outcome of this partnership is not only equitable access and achievement, but preparation of a highly skilled work force who will catapult Arizona into the top five states in terms of educational excellence, economic productivity and technological advancements.

Our new governor, Jane Hull, has indicated her support for solutions to the educational challenges facing Arizona including the need to develop rigorous academic standards for all students and to make the education they receive more relevant in their lives and in their future careers. I agree that these two issues are top priorities.

We must, as the governor suggests, all work together in an equal partnership with government, educators and business. Our shared vision should concentrate on six goals:

GOAL 1

Ensure that all Arizona schools are high-achieving — producing graduates ready to enter the work force with appropriate work skills or enroll in post-secondary institutions.

GOAL 2

Set high goals for poor and minority students.

GOAL 3
Measure performance against these goals.

GOAL 4
Increase the numbers of poor and minority students who graduate from high school eligible to enroll and graduate from college.

GOAL 5
Strengthen the school-to-work transition so that all students, particularly minority students who do not choose college, leave high school prepared to succeed in the world of work.

GOAL 6
Create a statewide partnership between school administrators, teachers, parents, students, community leaders, private schools and university faculty which will turn this vision and these goals into action.

Why we feel we must act now

The business-education partnership is critical to our state's economic future. No one can predict the effects of emerging technologies except to say that they will be enormous and employees will be affected in hundreds of ways.

What is certain, however, is that employees who are adaptable and who understand that a changing business environment calls for lifelong learning will benefit the most. If Arizona corporations do not have a steady supply of employees with these characteristics, individual businesses will suffer and our economy will suffer.

That is why I ask you to join me in a different kind of business-education partnership. During the past 10 years, Arizona corporations have joined with schools in funding special projects, sponsoring awards, providing expert counsel on business issues, encouraging employees to volunteer their time to educational causes and representing school system interests before the public and the legislature.

As a supporter of Arizona schools, I am proposing to strengthen our historical partnership with education by asking professional educators to sit side-by-side with business representatives to resolve the real problems facing the Arizona school system. Give business the opportunity to be a real partner. I believe corporations are willing to play that role and that our added value comes from our business perspective.

I am proposing to strengthen our historical partnership with education by asking professional educators to sit side-by-side with business representatives to resolve the real problems facing the Arizona school system.

What we need is an integrated information exchange, a two-way meaningful dialogue, by which strong partnerships can flourish, duplication of efforts are avoided, new partnerships are encouraged and successes are celebrated and given wide and deserving recognition.

The goals I have outlined are ambitious, but imminently doable. And, the returns to Arizona and our youth in our attaining them will be invaluable. As partners, I am confident Arizona can produce a world-class educational system and a first-rate work force. Arizona's students deserve no less and Arizona's businesses deserve the best.

NOTES

[1] *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, Volume XLIII, No. 1, (2 Sept. 1996), p. 40.

[2] H.L. Hodgkinson, *Arizona Education — Birth Through Graduate School* (Washington, DC: Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center, Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, Center for Educational Policy, 1996), p. 8.

[3] Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, *What Work Requires of Schools — A SCANS Report for America 2000* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

[4] The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book — State Profiles of Child Well-Being* (Greenwich, CT: Author, 1997).

[5] L.I. and Hope Rendón, *Educating a New Majority* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), pp. 10-12.

[6] Cf. Hodgkinson, pp. 13-16.

[7] Arizona Department of Education, *1993-94 Dropout Rate Study* (Phoenix: 29 Sept. 1995), p. 9.

[8] Arizona Board of Regents, *Annual Progress Report on Recruitment and Graduation of Minority Students* (Phoenix: 13 Feb. 1997), p. 5.

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